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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REPORT: INDIAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF
U.S.-CHINA JOINT STATEMENT

SUMMARY: The U.S.-China joint statement, issued during President Obama's November 15-18 state visit to China, generated heated discussion in India over its reference to China's potential role in India-Pakistan relations and South Asia. The Indian media widely reported that New Delhi on Wednesday said that India needs no external help to improve ties with Pakistan. In contrast to the GOI's "sharp" reaction, the ruling Congress Party reportedly downplayed the issue. Comments from Under Secretary William Burns, Assistant Secretary Robert Blake and Ambassador Timothy J. Roemer on the issue were reported as "damage control." Editorialists were divided on the issue, but the majority opinion was that the U.S., in its strategic and business interests, had given China monitoring rights on South Asia, which was unacceptable. Editorialists advised Prime Minister Singh to set the record straight when he meets with President Obama in Washington. Notable news reports and commentary from India's leading English and vernacular newspapers follow. End summary.

NEWS REPORTS

1. The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson was reported saying: "The Government of India is committed to resolving all outstanding issues with Pakistan through a peaceful bilateral dialogue in accordance with the Simla Agreement. A third country role cannot

be envisaged nor is it necessary." Reports noted that the ruling Congress Party sought to play down the issue. The party's spokesman told the media: "Too much is being read. I don't think there is any change in the U.S. policy towards us. If what was suggested in the press was intended, it would be objectionable. But we have no basis to say that. It was an interpretation of a casual remark. If it is carried any further, that will be the time to react." The spokesperson said relations between the U.S. and India, especially in the recent past, were on "solid footing," so a "casual phrase will not have any impact."

¶2. Media reports said key U.S. officials went into "damage control mode" on Wednesday. "Of course, the United States is interested in pursuing the best and healthiest possible partnership with China; but that does not come at the expense of other increasingly important partnerships, particularly our relationship with India," Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Williams Burns was reported saying. Assistant Secretary Robert Blake reportedly suggested that the U.S.-China joint statement related more to concerns about the Af-Pak region. Meanwhile, reports noted that Ambassador Timothy Roemer defended the joint statement, quoting the Ambassador saying: "I think that is a positive statement."

COMMENTARY

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¶3. "NO NEED TO PANIC," editorial in centrist, independent English daily, THE TIMES OF INDIA: "India has been mentioned for the first time in a U.S.-China joint statement since 1998, when Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin took issue with India for conducting nuclear tests. It was met with a stinging rejoinder from India. But this time around the reference to India hardly merits that kind of reaction. There are some misgivings about the direction of Indo-U.S. relations under the Obama government. Following the highs during Bush's presidency, Indo-U.S. relations seem to be somewhat adrift at the moment. The PM should use his visit to inject some much-needed momentum into the relationship. He must make clear that any mediation on Kashmir is unacceptable to New Delhi."

¶4. "DANCE WITH THE DRAGON," editorial in centrist, independent English daily, HINDUSTAN TIMES: "The east wind is prevailing over the west wind -- at least as long as the global economy remains trapped in a depression. This is the geopolitical weather forecast that follows the China visit of President Barack Obama. The reference to both countries "supporting" better relations between India and Pakistan is probably best understood in this context: a U.S. that has concluded its interests are best served by humoring the Middle Kingdom's whims. Beijing is no doubt pleased at a stray sentence that gives the impression it sits at the right hand of the sole superpower."

¶5. "JUST STAND FIRM WITH U.S., CHINA," editorial in independent English daily, DECCAN CHRONICLE: "The U.S. President's solicitousness of his Chinese hosts should cause no surprise. Equally, no Indian outrage is called for on account of condescending references in the U.S.-China joint statement to the situation in South Asia. However, insofar as supercilious mention is made in that document of India-Pakistan relations in the context of Kashmir, the Indian Prime Minister will be expected to set the record straight when he meets Mr. Obama in Washington in a few days' time."

¶6. "TO PLEASE CHINA, U.S. SLIGHTS INDIA," op-ed in right-of-center, pro-BJP English daily, THE PIONEER: "U.S. President Barack Obama's China visit has put the writing on the wall in bold: China is the next superpower the world must watch out for. The casualness with which India has once again been hyphenated with Pakistan is alarming, to say the least. As a country that calls India a strategic partner -- an unstated tool to contain Chinese hegemony -- the U.S. would have surely known what the re-hyphenation of India and Pakistan on Chinese soil meant. Mr. Obama may be new in office but surely an American President cannot be ignorant enough about India's sensitivities to ask China -- long seen as Pakistan's aide in its conflict with India, its prejudices and ploys no state secret -- to monitor an arena in which Beijing itself has geopolitical stakes. If India's strategic stature

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just got dwarfed in Beijing it has only the Manmohan Singh Government to blame."

¶7. "INDIA-PAKISTAN TIES NOT AMERICA'S CONCERN," editorial in THE PIONEER: "Indications of a certain chill in Washington towards New Delhi have been there ever since U.S. President Barack Obama began enunciating his foreign policy, especially on American engagement with Pakistan and Afghanistan. That chill has now begun to take form and shape by way of the Obama Administration seeking to turn the clock back and re-hyphenating India and Pakistan while re-strategizing the U.S.'s perceived role in South Asian affairs. It would appear that Mr. Obama is unimpressed by his predecessor's vigorous efforts to free U.S.-India relations from Washington's obsession with Islamabad and, in a sense, make it the cornerstone of American foreign policy in the region."

¶8. "TIME FOR PLAIN SPEAKING," analysis in nationalist English daily, THE STATESMAN: "Unless President Obama satisfies Dr. Manmohan Singh with the private briefing of his China visit, India should be prepared to fundamentally alter its attitude and policy towards America. President Obama's public posture regarding China's role in South Asia may not conform to his private endeavor."

¶9. "THE U.S.-CHINA TANGO," article in left-of-center English daily, DECCAN HERALD: "Any possible outrage in India arising out of the reference to South Asia in the joint statement and Obama's acknowledgement of China's potentially useful mediatory role in India-Pak relations, needs to be tempered by a hard reality check with regard to the entirely different nature of the Sino-U.S. strategic importance compared to the Indo-U.S. strategic ties."

¶10. "AMERICA'S PLOY IN CHINA," editorial in the right-of-center Hindi daily, AMAR UJALA: "President Obama's actions in China prove that for the U.S. the only thing that matters is its business and commercial interests. Obama is showing too much deference, almost subservience, to China. Not granting an audience to the Dalai Lama was the first sign of Obama trying to keep Beijing in good humor. But now he's gone a step further! In a statement during his China visit, the U.S. president acknowledged that Beijing has a role to play in the India-Pakistan relationship. What's going on? Is Obama giving a monitoring role to China in South Asia, particularly between India and Pakistan? This is outrageous! This just shows that America can go to any extent to further its business and commercial interests."

¶11. "CHINA'S ROLE," editorial in centrist, pro-Congress party Hindi daily, DAINIK HINDUSTAN: "The U.S.-China

joint statement reminds us of 1998 when a U.S.-China joint statement by Bill Clinton and Jiang Zemin asked India and Pakistan to resolve peacefully the 'difficult and long-standing differences' between them, including

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the issue of Kashmir. It will be a test of Indian diplomacy to see if we take it lying down, or react resolutely. While the statement may seem innocuous and even one of goodwill, in effect it gives a monitoring role to China in South Asia. This will never be acceptable to India! India partners with the U.S. to counterbalance China's leaning toward Pakistan. We want the U.S. to talk in our favor, not against our interests!"

¶12. "STRANGER IN THE MIRROR," editorial in nationalist Hindi daily, RASHTRIYA SAHARA: "The bigger the expectations, the greater the disappointment! Obama and Hu's joint statement in Beijing giving China a greater monitoring role in South Asia, particularly in India-Pakistan affairs, has given India a jolt. And all this while we thought America was our partner! It is strange that at the same time, the U.S. is bestowing the greatest honor in the world to India by welcoming Prime Minister Singh as the first official state visitor to Washington. In the face of this confusing contradiction, one can only conclude that Obama is playing to the gallery in China. And in America's business interests. After all, America needs to get out of recession, the China is the greatest market on earth to help it achieve that result."

¶13. "RESTRAINT NEEDED," editorial in left-of-center Kannada daily, PRAJAVANI: "America is eyeing on the huge market in China. Time and again, the U.S. indulges in pleasing China to serve its interest and the U.S. President has done the same again. Even after issuing a clarification in the wake of a protest by India, the U.S. has not grasped the situation in South Asia properly. President Obama has to explain about this to Prime Minister Singh during his visit to the U.S. next week. Prime Minister Singh should also explain to the U.S. about the disastrous consequences of a third country mediation in the highly sensitive India-Pakistan issues."

¶14. "YES IT IS SURPRISING," editorial in pro-Congress Telugu Daily, VAARTHA: "It is definitely surprising that U.S. President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao in the joint statement said that we can work towards achieving peace, tranquility and development between India and Pakistan. This targeted statement is not bad, but generally under what circumstances do this type of joint statements come out? It is like elders interfering in the problems of two minors."

¶15. "CHINA-U.S. JOINT STATEMENT," editorial in right-of-center Urdu daily, RASHTRIYA SAHARA: "We welcome the U.S.-China joint statement which supports the efforts for betterment of Indo-Pak ties and expresses willingness to promote peace and stability in the in South Asia. However, it remains to be seen how sincere the Obama administration is for the betterment of Indo-Pak relations. In the past, it has been making all out efforts to sow seeds of discord between the two countries. Also it is doubtful how sincere China, a

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close ally of Pakistan, will be."

¶16. "U.S. POLITICS," editorial in right-of-center Urdu daily, MILAP: "Why did President Obama mention Indo-Pak ties in the U.S.-China joint statement? It is

incomprehensible and totally unacceptable. Maybe he is playing politics as every country has the right to. If the U.S. really considers India to be a partner, then it must desist from raising issues which go against India. Indo-Pak ties are a bilateral issue, and the interference of any third party is not required at all. The U.S. has in the past offered its mediatory role, but every time India has rejected it. The U.S. should keep the fact in its mind that India has been supporting it on all regional and global issues. "

¶17. "OBAMA WANTS CHINA TO HELP REMOVE INDO-PAK DIFFERENCES," editorial in Urdu nationalist daily, AKHBAR-E-MASHRIQ: "The U.S. and China say in their joint statement that they want peace, stability, and economic and social advancement of all countries in Asia. What is the wrong in it? Peace is better than war. Considering the everlasting conflict between India and Pakistan, we should immediately grab any opportunity of establishing peace and prosperity coming from any part of the world. We should thank America and China for giving us this chance."

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